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EAST EUROPE BRANCH NOTES

March 11, 1974

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BULGARIA

New Ambassador to the United States

The Bulgarian State Council announced on March 8 that Lyubomir Dimitrov Popov will replace Khristo Zdravchev as Ambassador to the United States. The 56-year old Popov, a career diplomat and a former ambassador to Greece, has had considerable experience with US affairs. He served as Minister to Washington for two years (1963-65) and headed the American countries department of the foreign ministry for the next three years. During these assignments he stressed increased US-Bulgarian trade, pushed for MFN, and showed great interest in Western technology.

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His arrival in the US--presumably this spring--coincides with increased bilateral efforts to keep momentum in the gradually improving relationship. Sofia is seeking the rewards of detente as it sees them. It thus continues to play down improved political ties in favor of stressing access to US credits, technology, equipment, and eventually US markets through MFN. The Bulgarians realize that it will take time to reap these benefits, but Popov will surely keep up pressure for some sort of economic, technical or scientific agreement.

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POLAND

New and Improved Prices

For months Polish consumers have been complaining that, despite the government freeze on basic food items, their grocery bills have been going up. After a thorough investigation, officials have discovered the culprit. He turns out to be the individual producer, who by law may set a higher price for a "new or improved" product. Many firms have gone exclusively to a higher quality line of goods or, worse yet, have simply slapped new labels on old merchandise. In either case, the man in the street is paying more, and the government is feeling the heat.

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Churchmen Passes; Situation Remains

The death on March 10 of Boleslaw Cardinal Kominek, Archbishop of Wroclaw and third-ranking member of the church hierarchy in Poland, has been observed by a message of condolence from government chief Jaroszewicz. His demise is expected to have little further impact.

Kominek's see covered the former German territories, and his elevation to cardinal in February 1973 was interpreted by the regime as de facto Vatican recognition of Polish jurisdiction over the area. Kominek, a moderate by comparison with Cardinal Wyszynski, the conservative Polish primate, was prevented by prolonged illness from playing any major part in church-state relations.

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